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ABSTRACT

Since implementation of a psychology of teaching and learning should assist students to achieve optimally in reading, reading teachers need to be well versed in diverse psychologies which may be stressed in the curriculum. This paper first outlines 10 principles of learning emphasized by educational psychologists upon which psychologists tend to agree. The paper then states that a tightly knit sequence of learning experiences in reading stresses programmed learning via textbook or computerized programs. It details how the programmer orders reading activities and cites what programmed reading does not do. The paper also discusses a more open-ended method, Robert Gagne's eight steps of sequential learning, and it advances as a flexible form of teaching and learning the use by teachers of the basal reader in the reading curriculum. The paper concludes by discussing the Big Book program and personalized reading and the psychology of learning. (NKA)

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Psychologies in the Reading Curriculum.

by Marlow Ediger

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PSYCHOLOGIES IN THE READING CURRICULUM

Reading teachers need to be well versed in diverse psychologies which may be stressed in the curriculum. Each psychology needs to be understood in depth so that skills may be acquired to implement that which was chosen to become inherent in the teaching of reading. Implementation of a psychology of teaching and learning should assist students to achieve more optimally in reading.

Principles of Educational Psychology in Teaching Reading

Psychologists tend to agree upon the following principles of learning emphasized by educational psychologists:

1. students should be challenged to achieve reasonable goals in reading. If a student is not achieving optimally, he/she needs to be encouraged to achieve salient objectives of instruction. The amount of time spent in reading instruction in the public school years is short when thinking of all the needed knowledge, skills, and attitudes which students need to achieve. The student needs to feel that he/she must apply the self and reach out to goal attainment.
2. students should receive interesting activities directly related to achieving optimally in reading. Dull, uninspiring learning activities need to be replaced with those which engage learners wholeheartedly in reading achievement. If students are not interested and not engaged in learning to read, the chances are that optimal progress will not be an end result.
3. students need to feel that purpose is involved in learning that which has value. If phonics are taught, students need to perceive reasons for learning about sound/symbol relationships. Or, for example, students need to understand reasons for learning about diphthongs, vowel and consonant digraphs, as well as blends at the time they are being taught and used in context. Purpose for learning involves feeling that reasons are involved in reading achievement.
4. students need to feel that meaning is important when learning and achieving objectives of instruction. Meaning theory emphasizes that students understand what is taught. A lack of understanding may well make for students memorizing content taught for a test, but that is not meaningful learning. What is meaningful is comprehended by the learner and used to do as well as possible in ongoing reading lessons. The teacher may state the purpose for students, for example, needing additional practice in critical thinking in the reading curriculum.

5. students need to develop an adequate self concept so that they believe individually success in reading is possible and in the offing. The self concept is developed over time and pertains to what is believed and felt about oneself. If the learner feels and believes he/she cannot achieve well, the chances are some of these ideas will come to pass. The teacher and students need to put forth much effort for learning to read optimally being possible. Success in reading activities is paramount. Each reading lesson provides background knowledge and skills for the ensuing activities. The connections between the old and the new is important for the learner to visualize. The teacher has tremendous responsibilities, in assisting learners to perceive this relationship. Both student and teacher are involved here. It is very doubtful if the teacher can do it all for the student in having the latter to achieve as well as possible in reading. Teachers and students do have grave responsibiiities here.

6. students need to develop feelings of belonging within a group such as the classroom as a whole and in collaborative learning situations. Being an isolate is not a pleasant feeling. Feelings of positive involvement are a must! Students need to work in the direction of accepting each other as human beings having ultimate worth. The teacher is a guide and a stimulator in assisting students to be accepting of each other and in working cooperatively to develop the best reading program possible. All are involved if the setting for reading instruction is to be one of acceptance and belonging. Acceptance feelings should assist in developing better readers.

7. students need to feel that their contributions in reading achievement are recognized. Individuals crave in being recognized for what is being done well. The reading curriculum should provide numerous opportunities for students to feel rewarded for progress and achievement. Honest praise for a student achieving well over previous endeavors in reading provides opportunities for recognition. Students need to help each other to achieve and be recognized for making progress in reading achievement.

8. students need to possess feelings of security within the boundaries of the reading curriculum as well as across the curriculum. Feelings of security come from being able to achieve objectives in reading instruction within a positive instructional setting. Assistance from the teacher and from peers are both necessary if any one individual is to develop feelings of security in ongoing activities in reading instruction (Ediger, 2000, Chapter Seven).

9. students ned to have their individual learning styles attended to. Students individually learn in different ways and in diverse kinds of learning opportunities. It behooves the teacher to provide for these different styles of leaning. Thus there are students who work best within a collaborative setting whereas others achieve more optimally on an individual basis in reading instruction. Students then need to have opportunities to work within a group as well as individually, depending upon the style of learning possessed, if learning styles theory is to have its impact in achieving objectives of instruction (See Searson and Dunn, 2001, 22-26).

10. student possessed intelligence also needs to be recognized so that the learner may indicate what he/she has achieved in reading. There are a plethora of ways to reveal that which has been learned in reading , other than through testing only. Thus art work, construction projects, dramatizing, musical endeavors, among others, may be ways for individuals to show achievement in reading, although the basis of teaching and learning here are being able to recognize words sequentially and comprehending what has been read on different levels of complexity (See Gardner, 1993).

Students and the teacher have numerous responsibilities in developing a quality reading program whereby each learner achieves as optimally as possible in the instructional arena.

Objectives of Reading Instruction in the Psychological Arena

A tightly knit sequence of learning experiences in reading stresses programed learning via textbook or computerized programs. Here, the programer orders reading activities with the following:

1. the student reads a sentence or two.
2. he/she responds to a multiple choice test item covering the content read.
3. the learner checks the response given with that provided by the programmer as given in the text or on the monitor.
4. if the student responded correctly, he/she is and feels rewarded. If incorrect, the student sees the correct response and is also ready for the next programmed item. Read, respond, and check is done repeatedly by the student when engaged in programed learnings.
5. programmed learning my be considered as being teacher proof.

Programmed learning does not

1. permit student input into the reading curriculum since all content is sequenced strictly by the programmer.
2. the teacher is there to supervise student learning, but not to alter what is given by the programmer.
3. emphasize creativity by the student since programmed materials have been pilot tested so that the involved learner experiences much success in learning via the programmed learning route (Ediger, 1996, 284-286).

More open ended than programmed learning in a carefully developed sequence of reading subject matter is Robert Gagne's eight steps of sequential learning. These eight steps in order are signal learning such as a student responding habitually or automatically to a stimulus as in a single letter or word; stimulus/response as in programmed learning previously discussed above; chaining as in responding to a series of items sequentially as in reading a word, writing the word, checking it for correct spelling, and reviewing it within a contextual sentence; verbal association as in associating graphemes with phonemes; multiple discrimination as in identifying words correctly in a sentence by using contextual clues in that the identified words make sense within a paragraph; concept learning with students attaching meaning to each new vocabulary term; rule learning in that the student acquires a methodology for solving a problem in comprehension of content; and using these flexible steps of problem solving. The last three items in Gagne's psychology of learning which includes concept learning, rule learning, and problem solving can be quite open ended. Thus there are various approaches which may be stressed when having students attach meaning to concepts. Rule learning for using these concepts may emphasize an inductive or deductive procedure. Problem solving may stress identifying the problem by the student with teacher guidance, gathering information in answer to the problem, developing an hypothesis or answer to the problem, testing the hypothesis, and revising it if need be (Gagne', 1984, 96-102).

Gagne's theory of learning then emphasizes that teachers develop a tightly knit curriculum whereby the end question becomes, "What do I want students to learn in reading?" stated in measurable terms. The learning activities are then carefully sequenced so that the stated objectives are achieved by students. Each achieved objective assists a student to achieve the next sequential end. Then too, the learning activities are arranged in a hierarchical manner of increasing complexity.

The Psychology of Learning and the Basal Textbook

A very flexible form of teaching and learning is for teachers to use the basal reader in the reading curriculum. The stories have been sequenced by the writers of the chosen basal series of readers. The manual of the basal series contains objectives, learning opportunities, and evaluation procedures. Thus, the reading teacher may select what to use from the Manual. Objectives for reading instruction may be chosen from those in the Manual and/or from the teacher's own creative or tested ideas. The learning activities for students to achieve the chosen objectives need to be varied and provide for the needs and learning styles of students. The author in supervising student teachers in the public schools has noticed interns and regular teachers use varied learning opportunities to provide for learners of different ability and interest levels including

1. video tapes, slides, films, and filmstrips to provide background information prior to reading a specific selection from the basal.
2. library books to be read by students which relate directly to the topic being pursued in reading from the basal.
3. projects developed and made emphasizing that which has been learned in reading.
4. discussions, committee work, individual endeavors, and dramatizations stressed in ongoing reading lessons.
5. self appraisal of individual progress in reading (See Ediger, 1976, 249-251).

Evaluation techniques in the Manual of the basal reader can be implemented in part or use innovative procedures in assessing learner achievement and progress. Evaluation techniques used should assist in ascertaining if students have achieved the stated objectives. Diverse procedures should be used to truly determine what students have accomplished in reading. The following procedures may then be used to ascertain what students have accomplished and comprehended in reading subject matter:

1. paper pencil testing including multiple choice, true/false. completion, essay, and matching test items.
2. teacher observation of products and processes of reading. These may be recorded in teacher diary format/or anecdotal statements.
3. checklists and rating scales based on quality criteria pertaining to word recognition and comprehension.

4. teacher journal writing of student achievement and progress in reading.

5. diagnostic statements of what is left to learn pertaining to learner attainment in the ensuing reading program (Ediger, 2001, 22-26).

The Big Book Program and the Psychology of Learning

Young students may benefit from a holistic approach in teaching reading such as the Big Book procedure of instruction. The large illustrations therein and the related print discourse must have content large enough for all to see clearly in a committee, seated near to the teacher. No emphasis is placed upon the teacher teaching word recognition skills to students. The teacher introduces the lesson from the Big Book by having students view and discuss the large illustrations from the lesson being pursued. Learners then should possess background information to understand what will be read from the printed script. The teacher reads aloud the print, pointing to each word being read. He/she observes that students individually are on task. For the second reading, the teacher has students read aloud with the teacher. This is done as often as is necessary so that students develop a set of basic sight words in reading. These sight words help students in future lessons to identify words in context and become increasingly proficient in adding new words to the reading curriculum. Holism in reading content is stressed, not dividing what has been read into segments for word recognition analysis. Ideas read become the focal point of reading instruction, not word recognition techniques for student mastery. Thus a psychology of holism is being stressed (Ediger, 2000, 210-211).

Personalized Reading and the Psychology of Learning

In a personalized procedure of reading instruction, the student individually selects his/her own library book to read. There needs to be an adequate number of available books so that the learner may choose that which is most interesting. He/she sequences his/her own selections of reading materials continuously. After the completion of reading a library book, the student has a conference with the teacher. On a one on one basis, the student and the teacher discuss the contents of the completed library book. The teacher may ask higher cognitive order objectives such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation types of inquiry, or the student may explain in depth what has

been learned from the completed reading of the library book. Student input into the conference is vital. Toward the end of the conference, the learner chooses a selection to be read to the teacher to assess fluency in word recognition within the ongoing reading activity. The student then selects, sequences, and is heavily involved in the assessment process. Personalized reading follows the thinking of humanism as develop by Carl Rogers (1902-1987), a leading humanist psychologist. Humanism emphasizes that

1. students choose learning activities based on interests possessed. The teacher encourages learner initiative in selecting what to learn. A learning centers approach may be stressed with an adequate number of reading stations in which the learner may sequentially choose what to read from the different centers. Each center has stimulating library books to read on diverse genera and on different reading levels to meet each student's needs.

2. students are to be responsible individuals when making selections and persevere to complete what has been chosen. Choosing to be on task is important. The teacher here is a guide, not a dispenser of information nor to dictate choices to be made.

3. students intrinsically should choose to be life long learners and not depend upon the teacher to enforce rules of conduct in the reading of library books. Change is a key concept in the thinking of Rogers. He believed that content acquired may soon become outdated and thus staying abreast of subject matter read is salient. A student centered curriculum is to be emphasized and student self directed learning is to be encouraged (See Rogers, 1983).

There are diverse psychologies for teachers to use in teaching/learning situations. Each needs to be understood in depth and chosen on the basis of how it will assist the learner to achieve as optimally as possible in learning.

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